

January Gardening Guide

By Patricia Porchey

Gardeners eagerly anticipated December 25, 2006 because after several weeks of dry weather, the rain prediction was at ninety percent. November and December are typically two of the driest months and this year was no exception. When there is little rain, the need for supplemental irrigation increases. On the other hand, the cooler weather has decreased the need for watering as often, because moisture remains in the soil longer and is not as readily lost to transpiration or evaporation to the air.

Since 2001, Sarasota County has had watering restrictions that limit irrigation to one day a week and only one watering on that particular day. Should code enforcement observe a watering violation, you could be issued a written warning or a citation, with fees from \$100 up to \$500. An additional \$100 will be imposed if there is not a working rain shut-off device or sensor on your irrigation system. The current restrictions are:

- Watering is prohibited between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Addresses ending in **EVEN** numbers or the letters **A-M** may only water on **TUESDAYS**.
- Addresses ending in **ODD** numbers or the letters **N-Z** may only water on **THURSDAYS**.

You may wonder why this is important during a period of drought. One must only remember that what happens now affects our precious water resources in the warmer months when water may be less plentiful and much more necessary for healthy plants.

In an effort to assist you in avoiding a penalty, the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service has fact sheets on landscape care and maintenance, and pertinent information on how to set your automatic timer, how to use an automatic shut-off device, and how to have a landscape that not only is attractive, but also conserves water. You can also go to the University of Florida website and download information. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

Here are some tips to conserve water and also have healthy plants:

- Let your plants tell you when they need water – they wilt when they need water. Once a week watering in the cooler winter months may mean your plants are being *over watered* and subject to fungal problems. Water turf every 10-14 days if there is no rain, but water annuals, perennials and vegetables more frequently.
- Encourage your plants to develop more extensive roots systems so they can withstand less frequent watering. Do this by increasing the interval between watering.
- Water in the early morning when it's cooler and there's less wind; less water will be lost to evaporation.
- Calibrate your sprinklers so you know how much water is being applied. Place straight-sided cans in every zone and run for 15 minutes, then set the timer to accommodate the water needs of plants in each zone using the following guidelines: Apply up to 3/4 inch of water to grass and bedding plants and 1 inch to perennials, shrubs, young trees and fruit trees.
- Do not fertilize plants until spring, except for vegetables and annuals, as most plants' growth has slowed down.

- Plant a tree for Arbor Day, January 19, to reduce pollutant runoff from irrigation and provide wildlife habitat for birds, etc.

Upcoming educational classes:

You may now register for classes on-line at our website:

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/EdSched.htm> or call the number listed below.

- “Tropical & Subtropical Fruiting Fruits” at Florida House, January 9 at 2:00 pm. Call 316-1200.
- “Termites: Protecting your Investment” at Twin Lakes Park, January 10 at 10:00 am. Call 861-9900.
- “Planning your Wildlife Garden” at Florida House, January 13 at 2:00 pm. Call 316-1200.
- “Living Green – Environmentally Sound Pest Management” at Twin Lakes Park, January 24 at 1:00 pm. Call 861-9900.
- “FYN Grant Workshop” at Twin Lakes Park, January 24 at 4:00 pm. Call 861-9900.
- “Landscaping for Butterflies” at Shamrock Park, February 1 at 2:00 pm. Call 861-9900.

Planting guide:

Vegetables & Herbs: Beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, chives, collards, coriander, dill, eggplant, endive, fennel, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onion, parsley, peas, pepper, potatoes, radish, rosemary, sage, tomatoes, turnips, and watermelon.

Annuals: Alyssum, ageratum, Calendula, dusty miller, geranium, Lobelia, nasturtium, pansy, ornamental cabbage and kale, petunia, phlox, snapdragon, Statice and Verbena.

Perennials: Agapanthus, Amaryllis, calla lily, Clivia, Crinum lily, daylily, Dianthus, gloriosa lily, blue sage, Shasta daisy, society garlic, Tithonia, Viola, and walking iris.

Fruits in Season: Avocado, banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, and tangerine), hog plum, Indian jujube, kumquat, and papaya.

Blooming plants: Bougainvillea, Chinese hat plant, crown of thorns, desert rose, Jatropha, Kalanchoe, lion’s ear, mahoe, mango, Mexican flame vine, orchid tree, porterweed, red and yellow shrimp plants, Tabebuia, Thunbergia, and Turk’s cap.

If you have questions concerning your landscape, please call or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park. The **Master Gardener Help Desk** is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-Noon and 1-4:00 pm (861-5000). We have satellite service at the **Downtown Farmer’s Market** every second Saturday of the month to answer your questions.

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